



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 2, 2017

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL WELCOMES 2017 MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER ALL-STAR GAME AND
ANNOUNCES MAJOR SOCCER CONVENTION HEADED TO CHICAGO**

*Sellout Game at Chicago's Soldier Field will be watched by Hundreds of Thousands
of Soccer Fans Throughout the World*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today welcomed the 2017 Major League Soccer All-Star Game, presented by Target, to the city of Chicago. The game pits MLS' best players against Spanish superpower Real Madrid and will bring tens of thousands of soccer fans from all over the world to Chicago.

"Chicago is a global city and the ideal setting for one of the marquee matches of a sport that is played around the world," Mayor Emanuel said. "I want to wish the best of luck to both teams, although Real Madrid is going to need a lot more of it to have a chance at beating the MLS All Stars."

The MLS All-Star Game presented by Target will be played at 7:30 p.m. in front of a sellout crowd at Soldier Field. The game will be broadcast nationally on FS1 and Univision, as well as to nearly 200 countries worldwide.

"What a great moment this is for Chicago and a really special week for Fire fans across the city," Chicago Fire Soccer Club owner and chairman Andrew Hauptman said. "Chicago is one of the world's greatest and most passionate sports towns, and as our Club marks its 20th season, we can't think of a more fitting way to celebrate our sport. On behalf of the Fire, I thank the Mayor for rolling out the red carpet for this global event."

The Mayor also joined United Soccer Coaches to announce Chicago will host the organization's convention for three upcoming years, in 2019, 2025 and 2031. The convention brings together more than 12,000 members of the soccer community for five days each January. The annual convention generates between \$15- \$18 million in economic impact on average. It is expected to surpass \$20 million annually in Chicago.

The 76-year-old organization was formerly known as the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and has members in all 50 U.S. states and in 71 countries across the world.

Earlier this week Mayor Emanuel joined MLS and Chicago Fire officials to open two new mini-pitches in Gage Park. The mini-pitches provide a small area specifically designed for organized soccer programs and pick-up games.

“The Chicago Sports Commission and City of Chicago have been working with United Soccer Coaches to create a meaningful partnership that generates major impact to Chicago in a critical time period for our hospitality industry,” Kara Bachman, Executive Director of the Chicago Sports Commission said. “We are extremely excited that in less than 18 months we will welcome soccer coaches from around the world for their annual convention.”

The new mini-pitches were supported by MLS WORKS (MLS’ community outreach initiative), the Chicago Fire, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, Southern New Hampshire University and the Chicago Park District. They are designed to support local youth programming, including the Chicago Fire’s P.L.A.Y.S. Program and the Chicago Police Department’s new Community Engagement through Sports initiative.

Events like the MLS All-Star Game Presented by Target are helping Chicago continue to shatter tourism records. Overall tourism is up more than 20 percent since the Mayor took office. Chicago welcomed more than 54 million visitors last year, which supported nearly 150,000 jobs across the city and more than \$15 billion in investment in Chicago.

###